

# Improved car detection performance on highways based on YOLOv8

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## ABSTRACT

Car detection on the road through computer vision is crucial for improving safety, as it plays an essential role in spotting nearby vehicles and preventing fatal accidents. Additionally, car detection significantly contributes to the advancement of autonomous vehicles. Previous explorations of car detection using YOLOv5 have revealed weaknesses regarding its resulting mean average precision (mAP). This scenario led to the development of a more advanced version of you only look once (YOLO), namely YOLOv8. Consequently, this study aimed to adopt YOLOv8 for automatic car detection on the road. YOLOv8 is proven to perform better than the previous version. A dataset comprising video frame images was captured on the highway in Semarang, Indonesia. The experiment results indicated that the proposed approach achieved impressive precision, recall, and mAP values, reaching 94.1%, 98.2%, and 98.8%, respectively. The proposed approach enhanced mAP and training time when compared with YOLOv5. Therefore, it was concluded that the proposed method was better suited for real-time car detection.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The annual increase in cars on the road is causing problems such as traffic congestion and safety issues. Car detection technology on the road is crucial to improving safety and transportation efficiency, and its applications have been extended to various study areas. These areas include vehicle identification [1]-[8], car counting [9]-[13], speeding violation detection [14]-[16], and identification of seat belt violations by drivers [17]-[20]. One of the promising solutions for these challenges is computer vision technology. The you only look once (YOLO) algorithm for real-time object detection is a commonly used rapid computational processor.

Several studies have explored car detection using the YOLO algorithm. Sang *et al.* [21] utilized the YOLOv2-vehicle network and BIT-vehicle dataset. In addition, Fei-Fei *et al.* [22] conducted tests on the COCO dataset, comparing various YOLO variants such as YOLOv3, improved YOLOv3, and modified YOLOv3, with modified YOLOv3 showing superior average precision. Wang *et al.* [23] also compared different YOLO variants, including YOLOv2, tiny YOLOv2, tiny YOLOv3, and SPPNet-YOLOv3. The SPPNet-YOLOv3 outperformed the others regarding mean average precision (mAP) [23]. Meanwhile, Jahan *et al.* [24] compared YOLOv3, improved YOLOv3, faster region-based convolutional neural network (R-CNN), and modified YOLOv3. Various YOLO variants were also compared: YOLOv4, YOLOv4 tiny, YOLOv3, and YOLOv3-tiny, revealing that YOLOv4 achieved higher accuracy [25]. Song and Gu [26]

introduced YOLOv5 for real-time car detection, comparing it with traditional detection methods, which resulted in fewer false detections. On the other hand, Rafi *et al.* [27] proposed YOLOv5 for detection and tracking, surpassing other models in terms of mAP. However, it is a disadvantage regarding detection process speed. Due to this, a real-time technique that can enhance accuracy and speed detection.

YOLO has been widely used for object detection, including YOLOv3 for waste intensity and person detection in social distance [28], [29], YOLOv4 for fine-grain detection [30], and DenseSPH-YOLOv5 for road damage detection [31]. Moreover, Yung *et al.* [32] compared some versions of YOLO for detecting safety helmets worn by workers. The findings indicated that YOLOv7 outperformed the others, demonstrating higher mAP. Specifically, YOLOv7 showed better accuracy and speed than other methods. YOLOv8 is even more advanced than its previous version, offering high average accuracy. YOLOv8 has been applied for object detection, including traffic sign detection, which can increase mAP by 14% for YOLOv5 and 13% for YOLOv7 [33]. Therefore, this paper proposed car detection on the highway using YOLOv8. The primary contribution lies in the proposed method's ability to achieve relatively high accuracy to be applied in actual conditions.

## 2. METHOD

The car detection process outlined in this study passed through several stages, as shown in Figure 1. Typically, it consisted of data annotation, dividing data, training process, and testing process. The dataset comprised video frame images, with the primary goal being detecting car objects in these frames.

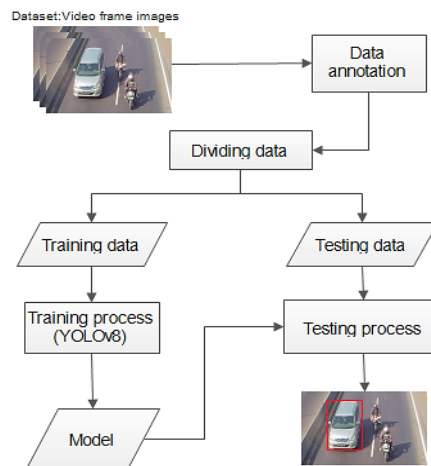


Figure 1. The research method for the car detection

### 2.1. Dataset

The dataset used consisted of video frame images containing car objects. These frames were extracted from video recordings on the streets of Semarang, Indonesia, particularly Pudak Payung Street, Banyumanik (Figure 2(a)), and Banyumanik Toll Road (Figure 2(b)). Cameras were used to record the video to provide an enhanced output. An example of the frame from the two locations is shown in Figure 2, and the frame had dimensions of 3840×2160 pixels.



Figure 2. Dataset example: (a) road street in Pudak Payung, Banyumanik and (b) toll road in Banyumanik

## 2.2. Data annotation

After acquiring image data, the next step was to annotate each car object in each frame. This annotation was performed by creating bounding boxes around the objects' areas. The total dataset used in this study was 2111 video frame images, split into two sets, namely 80% for training and 20% for testing, consistent with previous explorations [27].

## 2.3. Training process

We used the YOLOv8 model for the training process. Despite its compact model size, YOLO employed a network to estimate bounding boxes and class, establishing a reputation for achieving accurate object detection [34]. YOLOv8 consists of the backbone and the head, as shown in Figure 3 [35]. The backbone comprised 53 convolution layers with partial connections, which enhanced information flow and feature extraction. However, the head incorporated several convolutions and fully connected layers for object detection.

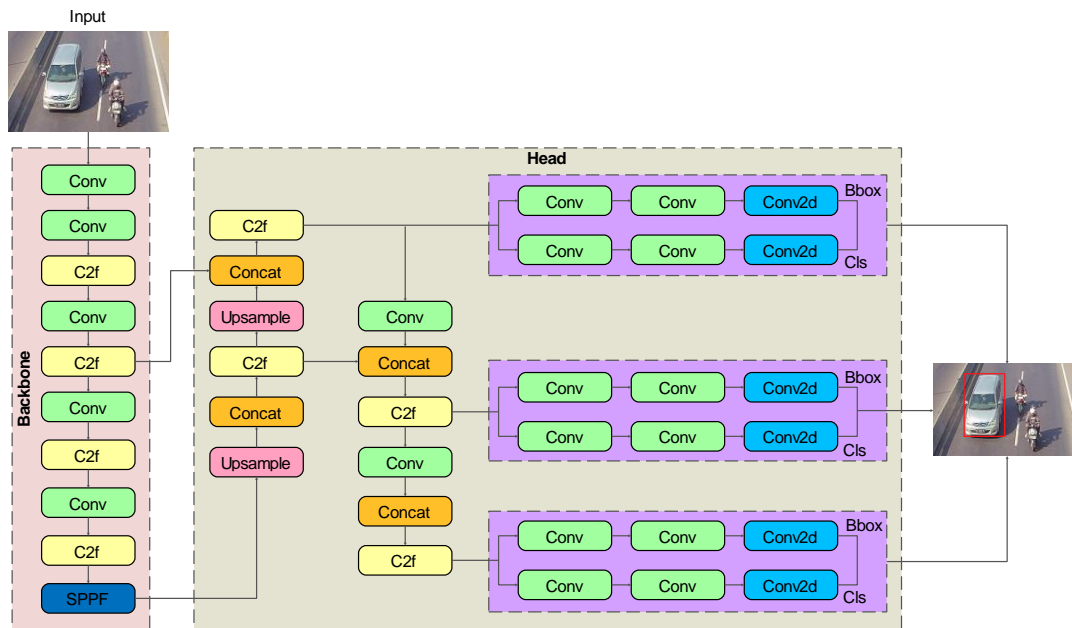


Figure 3. YOLOv8 architecture for car detection

YOLOv8 uses an anchor-free model for classification and regression [36]. This architecture enables each branch to concentrate on its role, improving the model's overall accuracy. The sigmoid function is employed as the activation function. The softmax function is used for class probability, reflecting the likelihood of each item belonging to a specific class.

YOLOv8 uses the complete intersection over union (CIoU) [37] and distribution focal loss (DFL) [38] for bounding-box and classification losses. These losses are utilized to improve the object identification performance. YOLOv8 additionally provides a semantic segmentation model called the YOLOv8-Seg. Instead of the traditional YOLO neck structure, the backbone uses a CSPDarknet53 feature extractor followed by a C2f module that is succeeded by two segmentation heads taught to anticipate semantic segmentation masks for the depicted image.

## 2.4. Testing process

The entire training process yielded a model used for the testing process. Performance evaluation was based on precision, recall, and mAP, with the added measurement of training time. Precision, recall, and mAP were calculated using (1) to (3) [39], where TP represented true positive detections, FP denoted false positive detections, and FN accounted for ground-truth objects that were not detected.

$$P = \frac{TP}{TP+FP} \quad (1)$$

$$R = \frac{TP}{TP+FN} \quad (2)$$

$$mAP = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N AP_i \quad (3)$$

$AP_i$  denotes the average precision for class  $i$ , and  $N$  represents the total of classes. The calculation of  $AP$  is determined by (4).  $P_i(R_{n+1})$  is computed using (5). Here,  $P(\tilde{R})$  represents precision measured at recall  $\tilde{R}$ .

$$AP = \sum_n (R_{n+1} - R_n) P_i(R_{n+1}) \quad (4)$$

$$P_i(R_{n+1}) = \max_{\tilde{R}: \tilde{R} \geq R_{n+1}} P(\tilde{R}) \quad (5)$$

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Tesla V100-SXM2-16GB was used for the testing processes, which were conducted using the YOLOv8x model, with 100 epochs and an early stopping set at 15. Testing included various batch sizes, namely 2, 4, 8, and 16, and the results were shown in Table 1. The highest precision achieved was 94.6%, with a batch size 16. The best recall and mAP reached 98.2% and 98.8%, respectively, using a batch size of 8. The shortest time for training recorded was 0.95 hours, with a batch size of 16. Figure 4 shows car detection results in various frame images for visual reference. From this example, it was evident that car objects partially obscured at the frame boundaries went undetected. However, apparent objects in the frame were successfully detected. This limitation could be addressed by including partially obscured car objects in the training data. Additionally, Figures 5(a) to (d) shows the proposed model's precision-recall curve, precision-confidence curve, recall-confidence curve, and F-1-confidence curve. Figure 6 explicitly shows the training and testing performance for the proposed model.

Table 1. Test results with varying batch sizes for car detection

Batch size	Precision (%)	Recall (%)	mAP (%)	Training time (hours)
2	92.5	97.9	97.1	3.24
4	94.4	97.8	98.5	1.22
8	94.1	<b>98.2</b>	<b>98.8</b>	1.69
16	<b>94.6</b>	98.0	97.9	<b>0.95</b>



Figure 4. Example of car detection

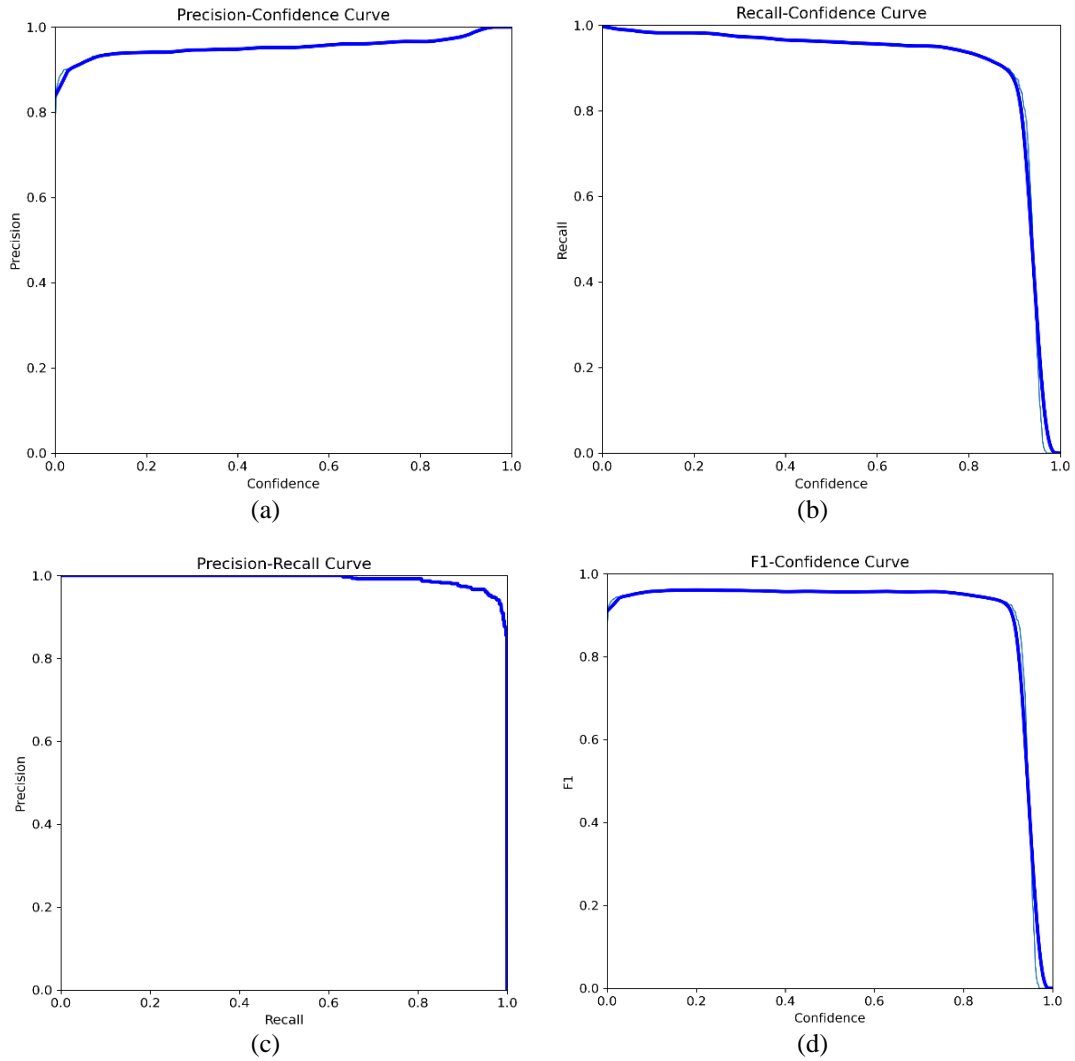


Figure 5. Performance of proposed method: (a) precision-confidence curve, (b) recall-confidence curve, (c) precision-recall curve, and (d) F1-confidence curve

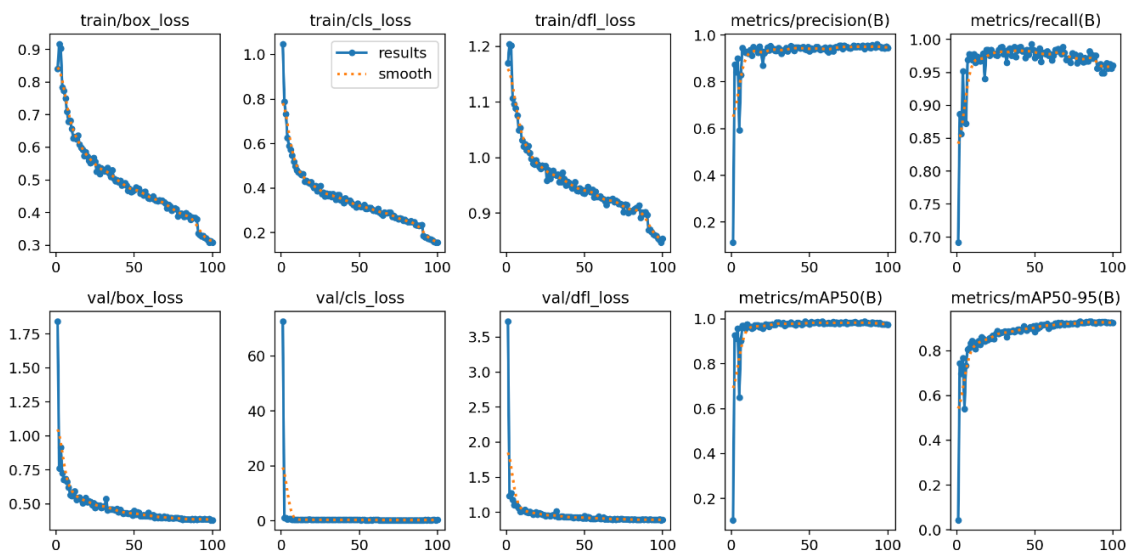


Figure 6. Performance of training and testing in the proposed method

Finally, we compare our method with the previous study, as seen in Table 2. In this comparison, [27] used the YOLOv5l method trained with 100 epochs and an image size of 640×640 pixels. The proposed method outperformed in terms of recall, mAP, and training time. The result showed a 2.2% increase in recall and a 0.4% increment in mAP. In the context of training time, the proposed method was 0.5 times faster than YOLOv5. Therefore, it was concluded that the proposed method offered superior performance and was better suited for real-time applications.

Table 2. Comparison between the proposed model and previous research

Method	Precision (%)	Recall (%)	mAP (%)	Training time (hours)
[27]	<b>96.0</b>	97.0	98.4	3.378
Proposed	94.1	<b>98.2</b>	<b>98.8</b>	<b>1.690</b>

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study proposed using YOLOv8 for car detection on the highway. Testing was done with various batch sizes, including 2, 4, 8, and 16. The results showed that the proposed method's precision, recall, and mAP values reached 94.1%, 98.2%, and 98.8%, respectively. Compared to YOLOv5, the proposed method increased recall and mAP values by 2.2% and 0.4%, respectively. Additionally, it reduced training time by half compared to YOLOv5, implying that the proposed approach was better suited for real-time applications. Even though the precision of the proposed method is relatively high, namely 94.1%, the proposed method produces a lower precision value than YOLOv5. This precision can be increased by adding a dataset with various types of cars on the road. This study could be extended by implementing license plate detection to identify the license plates on detected cars.

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